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So Sang They, Jesus!

LEE MAGNESS

This reading is comprised of most of the beautiful and powerful poetic passages in the New Testament. Each passage is followed by a poetic reflection. The nine sections of the reading may be incorporated into worship as a whole or separately. One voice might announce the title of each section, a second voice read the New Testament passage, and the first voice word the poetic response. If the words are displayed on a projection screen, the worshippers might be invited to join in on the last line of each section.

1 ~ So Sang They, Glory!

Glory to God in the highest

And on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased. (Luke 2.14)

*Glory, they sang, glory to God,
a paean of peace, sang the angels,
a flood of favor, God's full favor,
praise and peace and pleasure,
echoing from eternity to earth—
a baby was about to be born,
so sang they, Glory!*

2 ~ So Sang She, Mercy!

**My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.
He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the humble;
he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever. (Luke 1.46–55)**

*With humility she sang of holiness,
with joy she sang to the generations,
to the mighty she sang the Mighty One,
to the hungry health, to the empty wealth,
her soul a magnifying glass for the Sovereign himself—
her baby was about to be born,
so sang Mary, Mercy!*

3 ~ So Spoke He, Light!

**My eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel. (Luke 2.30–32)**

*The old seer had finally seen
salvation snuggled in his hands,
a Savior with skin, cooing and crying,
not just for Jews but for Gentiles,
prepared, present, in awe of the “all”—
the glory was aglow, the child had come,
so spoke Simeon, Light!*

4 ~ So Shouted He, Salvation!

**Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (Luke 3.4–6)**

*Like a clarion in the canyons,
like a pathfinder through the wilderness,
he watered all their arid hearts.
The lowly would be lifted,
the haughty would become holy—
the Leveler leaped forth, a dripping Deliverer,
so shouted John, Salvation!*

5 ~ So Confessed They, Sovereign! Servant!

**Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God,
did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,
but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant,
being born in the likeness of men;
and being found in human form, he humbled himself
becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2.5–11)**

*Divine but not clinging to divinity,
everything but now nothing,
full but fine with being empty,
human, humble, humiliated,*

*dying, dying despicably—
the lowly Lord has been exalted,
so confessed they, Sovereign! Servant!*

6 ~ So Cried Creation, Peace!

**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
For by him all things were created,
in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—
all things were created through him and for him.
And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
And he is the head of the body, the church.
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
that in everything he might be preeminent.
For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
making peace by the blood of his cross. (Col 1.15–20)**

*Seen image of the unseen Imaginer,
Co-creator, precursor, co-inherer,
first, reborn first, head first,
preeminent among and above all things,
filled with the fullness of the Father—
a Conciliator on a cross, bonding with blood,
so cried creation, Peace!*

7 ~ So Sang the Son, Arise!

**Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you. (Eph 5.14)**

*Asleep as sleep, spiritual shut-eye,
dead as the living dead,
waking from sleepwalking,
rising from the definitely dead,
Son shone, Daystar dawned—
Light of the world would light them up,
so sang the Son, Arise!*

8 ~ So Sang the Ransomed, Hope!

**You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers,
not with perishable things like silver or gold,
but with the precious blood of Christ,
like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.
He was foreknown before the foundation of the world**

**but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you
who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead
and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Pet 1.18–21)**

*Heirs of history, offspring of emptiness,
the ransomed are rich, full, truly treasured,
a lamb precious and perfect, given to glory,
a lamb all bloody and slain, slain and raised,
God's will for faith from first to last—
the unbleating lamb has bled his blood,
so sang the ransomed, Hope!*

9 ~ So Sang the Blessed, Blessing!

**Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered,
so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.**

**Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.**

**Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive
power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!
To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!**

Amen! (Rev 5.5–14)

*To the lion and the lamb, sovereign and sacrifice,
to the conquering king who made all kingdoms his kingdom,
to the priest who made all people his priests,
to the worthy one who made all the ransomed reign,
power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory—
worthy is the Lion, worthy is the Lamb,
so sang the blessed, Blessing!*

LEE MAGNESS TEACHES NEW TESTAMENT AT MILLIGAN COLLEGE IN JOHNSON CITY, TENNESSEE.

